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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KAY R. HAGAN, a Senator from the State of North Carolina.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Eternal Spirit, our shelter in the time of storm, thank You for the opportunity to serve You and our country. Remind us that You are more interested in our faithfulness than our success.

Today, empower our lawmakers to be faithful in the small things, thereby qualifying themselves for greater opportunities to serve. Make them worthy stewards of the rich resources You have given our Nation, as they remember the rich legacy of faithful labor that punctuates our history. Guide their thinking so that they will see Your plan and follow Your leading.

And Lord, on this anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, we think of all the veterans of past wars, those currently in harm's way and all who have served in our Nation's military. Thank You for their sacrifices and for the faithfulness of their loved ones.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KAY R. HAGAN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 7, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KAY R. HAGAN, a Senator from the State of North Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. HAGAN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the health care legislation. Following those remarks, the first 2 hours will be for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority will control the next 30 minutes. The remaining hour will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees. The Pryor amendment regarding enrollee satisfaction and the Gregg amendment regarding Medicare are pending. In addition, I have been informed by Senator BEN NELSON that he will offer sometime today the abortion amendment, either as the lead sponsor or as a co-sponsor. We hope to complete these amendments this afternoon sometime and move on to other matters.

I should inform Members, we will not be in late tonight. There is an event at the White House that a number of Senators will be attending. So we will not be in late tonight, but the rest of the week we probably will be. As I indicated, it appears we certainly have to be in this weekend again.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Madam President, I think everyone will acknowledge the legislatively historic time in which we are now involved. We have tried to get to this point with health care legislation for almost 70 years. We are there. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel, so that people in the future will not have to file bankruptcy because they get sick. That is what happens today. For example, 750,000 people filed bankruptcy last year, as I have said here on a number of occasions, and almost 70 percent of those who filed bankruptcy did so because of medical expenses. In addition, 62 percent of those who filed because of medical expenses had insurance. That pretty well says it all.

There is not one of us who has gone home in recent months and hasn't had someone come to us in a grocery store or some other public event and say: My daughter has diabetes. She is now 23 years old. She goes off our insurance. What are we going to do? She can't get insurance.

That is going to stop. There is nothing the people of America want more than for us to do something about this. They want us to stop greedy insurance companies from denying health care to the sick and taking away your coverage at the exact time you need it the most. They want us to make it illegal for multibillion-dollar companies to say: I am sorry, your high cholesterol is going to prevent us from giving you an insurance policy or you were in an accident and badly injured your leg a few years ago and we can't give you insurance now or you are too old or you have hay fever or you have asthma. We have all heard the stories. These insurance companies say: You are on your own. Why? Because they are concerned more about their bottom line than they are about taking care of the American people. I was here a couple days ago talking about an insurance

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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